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DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/MLS AND DRL
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [CB](#)
SUBJECT: CAMBODIAN OPPOSITION ON STATUS OF TALKS WITH
RULING PARTY

Classified By: CHARGE MARK C. STORELLA FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) Sam Rainsy Party (SRP) MP (and Sam Rainsy spouse) Saumura Tioulong -- please protect -- told us March 6 that PM Hun Sen recently offered to take opposition leader Sam Rainsy into the government as a deputy prime minister, possibly with broad authority over various ministries. Rainsy reportedly declined, telling the PM that such a move would be "political suicide" for an opposition leader. Instead, he suggested that Hun Sen appoint him to lead the anti-corruption commission that is to be established under new pending legislation. She believes that the position would be a winner for the opposition as it would further burnish opposition anti-corruption credentials and would also have the effect of associating the party with attracting much needed foreign investment. The two parties are already engaged in detailed negotiations on the proposal.

¶2. (C) When asked why Hun Sen was proffering important posts to the SRP, Saumura said she believes the PM wants to pursue real reform and has difficulty leading it himself. She added that part of Hun Sen's motivation was likely that the CPP sees improved relations with the opposition as a means of improving relations with the U.S. She said that the SRP has been playing on this and has even begun to filter back to Hun Sen that the SRP would actively work to promote a visit by the PM to Washington as early as next year if the PM followed through on his reform ideas. (Note: we pointed out to her that the SRP should be careful about making any such promises.)

¶3. (C) On the recent decision of FUNCINPEC leader Prince Ranariddh to resign as president of the National Assembly, Saumura said that the FUNCINPEC party had been in decline since its original election victory in 1993. Nevertheless, she said that the ruling CPP party had an interest in maintaining the shell of a FUNCINPEC structure in order to avoid a political crisis. She said that the SRP expects the SRP to be the main beneficiary of former FUNCINPEC votes at the 2007 local and 2008 national elections.

¶4. (C) Comment: Political events in Phnom Penh continue to develop in a rapid and positive direction. The prospect of an opposition-led anti-corruption commission was unthinkable only a few weeks ago. While we have cautioned SRP about promising any visits to Washington, if concrete progress were made on important democratic reforms, at some point such a proposal could be used to further the political reform process along. End Comment.

